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GRG 336—Contemporary Cultural Geography
Spring 2011

"Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings." —Edward Said

Course Description

Activists converge on a public park to protest government policies. A city is divided by plans to transform its decaying industrial downtown into a gleaming post-industrial conference center. People organize a pride march through a gay neighborhood. Controversy erupts over public art commemorating an historical event. People argue about what to do with the site of the former World Trade Center. A women's group marches to "take back the night." These are the kinds of issues that we'll take up in this class.

As an advanced course in cultural geography, this class will survey recent developments, both theoretical and topical, in the study of cultural landscapes. We'll look at what geographers are currently saying about the relationship between culture and space, especially around power—social, economic, and political. We'll focus on the construction of landscapes and the everyday practices that imbue them with meaning, the ways those meanings are contested and struggled over, and how the relationship between culture and space plays a central role in the social construction of class, gender, sexuality, race, nature, and postcoloniality.

Texts

- *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* by Don Mitchell, available in the bookstore.
- Readings on Blackboard

Assignments/Requirements

Midterm (20% of course grade)

The midterm exam will cover our discussions of (and readings on) how to define "culture," its relationship to geography and landscape, and the history of cultural geography.

Reading Journal (15% of course grade)

For each of the 13 primary text readings (indicated with an asterisk on the schedule), you need to complete a reading journal worksheet before class.

Research Paper Project (30% of course grade for paper + 15% for presentation = 45% total)

The final project for the course will be a 10- to 12-page research paper that applies some of the theories discussed throughout the course to the analysis of a landscape, space, place, or issue (an event, controversy, development, etc.), based on original research that you conduct. You will also make an in-class presentation based on your paper.

Final Exam (20% of course grade)

The final exam will cover theories and concepts from the second half of the course, which draw on those from the first half.

Discussion/Participation

You are expected to be prepared for class, having done the assigned reading. Participation in class discussions and taking an active interest in class is also assumed.

Flags (Language from the Center for the Core Curriculum.)

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

Policies

- Late assignments will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day late (including weekends).
- I do not accept papers via email.
- No laptops or text messaging in class.
- I do take attendance. **Beginning with the fourth, you will lose one-third of a grade for each absence.**

University guidelines state, "for each hour a class meets, an average of two additional hours of preparation is expected of the student." This class meets three hours a week; you should, therefore, expect about six hours of out-of-class work per week. Grades are defined by university policy in the following manner: "A (excellent), B (above average), C (average), D (pass), and F (failure)." This class will use the "plus/minus" system.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. It constitutes a serious breach of academic honesty and can result in a failing grade or expulsion from school. If you consult with or use any sources (essays, encyclopedias, websites, books, magazines, etc.), you must acknowledge them in your paper. Please be aware of university policies on academic integrity.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs

One of the goals of this course is to create an environment which encourages and allows all students to participate in and benefit from class activities. Students with disabilities and/or special needs will be reasonably accommodated in this regard. If you have a disability or special need, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>).

The Undergraduate Writing Center

The Undergraduate Writing Center provides individual, professional advice on all aspects of writing to UT undergraduates on a drop-in basis or by appointment. I encourage you to take advantage of this resource. Location: Flawn Academic Center 211, phone 471-6222. More info, including the current semester's hours, at <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

A Few Comments

I cannot stress this enough: Communicate with me! Please ask for help when you need it. If you are having problems, let me know *early*, and I will do what I can to help. I have weekly office hours, which are times when I am specifically available for students. By all means, come and talk to me about any concerns or problems you have with any aspect of this course—or just stop by to talk about ideas and issues raised in class. Feedback (positive and negative) about the course is always welcome, and I'm happy to consider ideas you may have for improving the course along the way. I am also available at other times; just ask!

Course Schedule

		Topic	Primary Text	Supplementary Reading
Week 1	M 1/17 W 1/19 F 1/21	MLK Holiday Course Introduction What is "culture"?	Introduction*	On New Orleans (handout)
Week 2	M 1/24 W 1/26 F 1/28	What is "culture"? History of cultural geography The "new" cultural geography	Ch 1 p 3-16* Ch 1 p. 16-26* Ch 2* (p37-47, 51-53, 63-65)	Sack Williams (culture), Buenger Lewis (handout)
Week 3	M 1/31 W 2/2 F 2/4	Culture, spectacle, resistance Culture, spectacle, resistance Culture, spectacle, resistance	Ch 6*	Ley & Olds Film: <i>Merchants of Cool</i>
Week 4	M 2/7 W 2/9 F 2/11	Landscape Landscape Landscape	Ch 4*	Delyser, Crump
Week 5	M 2/14 W 2/16 F 2/18	Landscape Landscape Landscape	Ch 5* (p120-125, 129-135, 142-144)	Creswell, Duncan
Week 6	M 2/21 W 2/23 F 2/25	Midterm Review Intro to Research Projects Midterm		
Week 7	M 2/28 W 3/2 F 3/4	Sexuality Sexuality Sexuality	Ch 7*	Muller Sibalis
Week 8	M 3/7 W 3/9 F 3/11	Gender Gender Gender	Ch 8*, Bondi & Domosh*	Day hooks
Spring Break 3/14 – 3/18				
Week 9	M 3/21 W 3/23 F 3/25	Race Race Race	Ch 9* (skip p. 241-250)	Schein, Kuhlman Koyayashi & Peake
Week 10	M 3/28 W 3/30 F 4/1	Nature Nature Nature	Soper*, Demeritt*	Williams (nature) Wilson Anderson
Week 11	M 4/4 W 4/6 F 4/8	Research proposals due Postcolonialism Postcolonialism		May
Week 12	M 4/11 W 4/13 F 4/15	Postcolonialism Rich out of town (AAG) Rich out of town (AAG)		Jacobs
Week 13	M 4/18 W 4/20 F 4/22	Research Research Research		
Week 14	M 4/25 W 4/27 F 4/29	Presentations Presentations Presentations	Draft papers due	
Week 15	M 5/2 W 5/4 F 5/6	Presentations Presentations Presentations		
Finals	T 5/16	Final 2-5 pm/Research papers due		

*Readings for which you need to complete a reading journal